DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 014 CS 003 657

AUTHOR	Parker, Ronald K.; And Others
TITLE	A Multisite Evaluation of Reading Is Fundamental: Summary Report.
INSTITUTION	City Univ. of New York, N.Y. Center for Advanced Study in Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.
REPORT NO	CASE-15-75
PUB DATE	Jul 75
NOTE	62p.; For related document, see CS 003 408; Some parts may be marginally legible due to print quality
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Involvement; *Disadvantaged Youth; Elementary Education; *Program Evaluation; Reading Interests; *Reading Research; *Recreational Reading; *Student Attitudes; Student Motivation
IDENTIFIERS	*Reading Is Fundamental

ABSTRACT

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is a national program that seeks to motivate children to read. Implemented by local sponsors and aimed at disadvantaged groups, it offers participating children a wide selection of attractive paperback books about interesting people, places, and events. The multisite evaluation summarized in this report studied children, their parents, their teachers, and the RIF delivery agents in six sites in different parts of the nation. The evaluation investigated both the outcomes and the process of project operations, though results related to process are not dealt with in detail in this report. Matched samples of fifth graders and second graders, half of whom were attending RIF programs and half were not, were interviewed and tested in the study. Among the generally favorable findings was the fact that RIF students exhibited more positive feelings about being in the presence of books, though RIF did not appear to be affecting children's more general views of school and of reading. (AA)

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A Multisite Evaluation of Reading Is Fundamental: Summary Report

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Report Number CASE-15-75
July, 1975

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword and Acknowledgments	iii
The Reading Is Fundamental Program	1
The Multisite Evaluation of the Reading Is Fundamental Program	10
Methodology of the Product Evaluation	13
Sample Selection	13
Instrumentation	15
Procedure	16
Results	18
The Composite Child Instruments	18
The Factor Scales from the Composite Child Instruments	23
The Composite Parent Instruments	28
The Teacher Instrument	32
The Library and Community Center Interviews	37
Discussion	38
Limitations of the Miltisite Evaluation of the Reading Is Fundamental Program	42
General Limitations of Social Action Evaluative Research	42
Specific Limitations of the Reading Is Fundamental Evaluation Project	44
Recommendations	50
Research Design and Instruments	50
RIF Developments and Orientations	52

LIST OF TABLES

Page

TABLE I: Growth of Nationwide Reading Is Fundamental Programs Since 1969. 9

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The evaluation to be discussed in the following pages will hopefully add to our general knowledge of children's attitudes and behavior toward books, reading, and school. More specifically, these data may be helpful to the staff of Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) as the program expands.

It is advisable to note that all studies of this scope have limitations and no evaluation can be considered definitive. Limitations in sampling procedure, instrumentation, and focus are present; however, this report documents the most thorough evaluation of RIF to date. It is being issued in two versions: the *Technical Report*, which contains fuller treatments of the topics on the following pages as well as the complete battery of instruments used in the evaluation; and the present *Summary Report*, which is intended for a more general readership.

Four groups interacted to make this evaluation project a success. The National RIF staff provided invaluable historical perspective and continuous consultation on various facets of the effort. Mrs. Margaret C. McNamara, the developer of RIF, was a pleasure to work with. Her dedication is a model for all social reformers. Dr. Sidney Nelson, president of RIF, recognized from the beginning the importance of an extensive evaluation of RIF -- to expand on RIF's strengths and to modify any weaknesses. His key Washington staff members, Ms. Barbara Atkinson and Ms. Bibi Mays, were always available to help us better understand the program.

Acknowledging that RIF is a program of national importance with public policy implications for education, the Carnegie Corporation awarded a grant to the Center for Advanced Study in Education to conduct a nationwide evaluation of RIF. Ms. Barbara Finberg, the Carnegie project officer, was helpful initially in clarifying the objectives of the evaluation and in continually monitoring the effort. I sincerely appreciate the foundation's grant in an era when research, development, and evaluation support is dwindling.

No project director is smart enough to undertake a complex task like an extensive evaluation of RIF without help from others. While a distinguished Advisory Board was envisioned from the beginning, I am pleased to report that the members of this "blue-ribbon" group did not merely lend their names to the effort; they actually worked. Every critical decision in experimental design, instrumentation, and scope of work was reviewed and approved by the following Advisory Board members:

Dr. Jeanne S. Chall, Professor of Education and Director of the Reading Laboratory, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Dr. Alan Cohen, Director, Systems Division, Random House, Inc.

Dr. Sidney P. Marland, President, College Entrance Examination Board.

Dr. Francis H. Palmer, Provost, Educational Research and Development, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Ms. Marguerite C. Selden, Former Councilwoman, Washington, D.C., City Council.

Dr. Max Weiner, Director, Center for Advanced Study in Education, and Executive Director, Ph.D. Program in Education, the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York.

As a group and as individuals, they were a tremendous help, and I thank them for sharing their talents with us, considering their busy schedules.

Everyone knows that project directors receive too much of the credit for the efforts of their groups. Let this not be the case here. The project staff was a beautiful mixture of dedicated, talented individuals. Dr. Virginia Sibbison and Dr. Karl Heiner contributed their special skills in data analysis and report writing to insure an objective and literate report. Ms. Marion Grogan assessed all of the subjects in the study from California to New York. May I be forgiven for inflicting so much work on such a nice person. Ms. Ruth Kass, Ms. Gladys O'Neil, Ms. Joan Clayton, and Ms. Mildred Tessler were involved in data analysis, report writing, and project administration. I thank them again for all of their help!

Ronald K. Parker, Ph.D
Project Director

THE READING IS FUNDAMENTAL PROGRAM

"I liked my book about Arthur Ashe. My father read it, too."

"Thank you for your books because I never had any before. Your friend, Irene."

". . . RIF is the best program to have come to Harlem as of yet. . . . I hope RIF will be around for a long time."

"Hey, this is great. If RIF had been around when I was in school maybe I could read well now."

These four quotations, two from children and two from adults, convey the flavor of thousands of comments stimulated by the nine-year-old book program, Reading Is Fundamental (RIF). RIF is a rapidly expanding nation-wide venture whose dominant long-range goal is to motivate children to want to read. Implemented by local sponsors and aimed at disadvantaged groups, it offers participating children a wide selection of attractive paperback books about interesting people, places, and events -- books to read for pleasure rather than school texts. In keeping with RIF's primary purpose, each community program:

- Provides a minimum of five paperbacks as free gifts during a school year to each child in the program;
- Furnishes a wide selection of titles;

- Gives each child total freedom of choice in selecting his or her books;
- Continues in operation over a period of at least three years;
- Involves the parents of the participants;
- Involves a cross section of community agencies and groups.

The initial concept of RIF dates back to 1966 and to Mrs. Margaret C. McNamara's work as a reading teacher aide in the Urban Service Corps program in Washington, D.C. Mrs. McNamara found that although many of her pupils (most of whom came from economically disadvantaged environments) were not interested in textbooks, they did display enthusiasm for the bocks she sometimes brought from her home. As many of the children did not own any books, Mrs. McNamara became convinced that having "fun" books that belonged to them might motivate them to want to read.

The original RIF program was begun as a pilot project in the District of Columbia, supported by funding sources such as the Meyer and Cafritz Foundations. The program enjoyed a rapid and striking success, so that subsequent grants from the Ford Foundation and the Old Dominion Foundation facilitated the expansion of the program to a national level.

The National RIF program was established in 1968 and is housed in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The national office serves as an organization center, providing guidance and technical advice, circulating reports and materials from all RIF programs, conducting workshops on how to develop and manage local projects, and serving as a coordinator for bringing together interested people in various cities, towns, or states who want to start projects.

Individual RIF programs are the essence of RIF, since the strength of each project lies in the grass-roots involvement of children, parents, teachers, and other community members. At the local level RIF programs are voluntarily sponsored by organizations such as libraries, business associations, fraternal clubs, the American Association of University Women, the Jaycees, Church Women United, the Urban League, business firms, and banks.

Each local RIF project is unique. Initiated and run by people of the local city, each project is geared to the needs of the particular community it serves, be it an Indian reservation, a rural town of the deep South or Appalachia, a Chicano community in the middle or far West, or a large urban ghetto in the East.

Generally, according to the guidelines of the National office, the local RIF approach has been to set up a series of book distributions or "book fairs" through which each participating child is invited to select at least five free books per school year. Many projects

also give children the opportunity to buy additional titles for a minimal charge; some even offer books to parents and teachers to purchase at cost. Ancillary events often accompany a distribution: storytelling sessions, discussions of favorite titles, visits to neighborhood libraries, and group singing of the "RIF song." Parents, high school and college students, Neighborhood Youth Corps workers, and interested community leaders frequently volunteer to help the local RIF staff manage the logistics of the distributions and are an integral part of ongoing operations. Some projects, for example Pittsburgh's, have organized follow-up activities such as a Home Reading Program, a RIF Membership Club, a *RIF Book Review* (a collection of book reports submitted voluntarily by students), and a Reading Incentive Program at a number of libraries.

Whenever a RIF project emerges, community and school reactions are overwhelmingly positive. Children are excited about choosing and keeping their own books, trading them with their siblings and friends, and building home libraries. Parents come to school to help distribute the paperbacks and delight in their children's pleasure at receiving and reading them. Teachers marvel at the care students take building and maintaining their own classroom libraries and their enthusiasm for sharing and discussing their favorite titles.

Members of the National RIF office have received literally hundreds of letters from project sites all over the country.

A teacher in Hebbronville, Texas has written:

"The RIF program motivated parents as well as youngsters, and

several parents helped in the distribution of books. It was gratifying to see the youngsters carrying their books with a look of joy and pride of ownership as they left the room. The program has given our youngsters a big interest in reading, all due to the access to the wide variety of interesting and exciting books, books which have improved their reading."

A letter from a Winnett, Montana librarian concludes:

" We are of the opinion that our program was an excellent one and that it kept many students reading who would not have bothered to go near the Library in summer. We are not especially an economically deprived community, and so our program was not addressed to so-called "poor children." Our program was run for motivation purposes only, and for each paperback book that was awarded the participants, another copy was placed on the Library shelves, so the Library really profited and this also served to introduce the books to the readers. . . .

"There was such enthusiasm on Awards Day that there was a line waiting at the door when we unlocked the door at 8:00 A.M. One family from 35 miles out in the country was in by that time."

A St. Louis teacher sent the National RIF office these observations:

"We received terrific support from parent volunteers at our RIF

schools where we established paperback room-libraries in each classroom. At twenty-four locations suburban volunteers were active in RIF room-library installations, thirty-four parents were involved. Eight schools including 128 rooms were visited, 3,747 children reached, about 18,750 books distributed.

"Capable volunteers did the work! They surveyed the needs, selected and ordered appropriate titles, checked invoices and incoming deliveries, unpacked and shelved books, allocated them to proper volunteers, and went into classrooms to tell students about their bright new paperbacks (which, incidentally, were to be taken home by the students at the conclusion of the program).

"RIF is a very special kind of program to motivate people to want to read. In one way or another it reaches out to all ages, proving that books can be vital and interesting. RIF helps put it all together!"

And a faculty member of a Waltham, Massachusetts public school commented:

"An unusual effect. . . was that non-English-speaking parents were becoming very interested in using the books as a source of reading material after they had some English as a Second Language aid, and other parents, some of whom did not progress too far in school, were using them in the home to support their own reading habits as well as to share the books with other

children. In fact, Reading Is FUNdamental was a motivational factor in 'getting the family to read'!"

These excerpts are persuasive testimony to the welcome local RIF programs are receiving from the people directly involved in them. Community responses have been equally positive and encouraging, as reflected in the large numbers of newspaper articles concerning the projects. To cite only a few, accounts have appeared in The Tennessean (Nashville, Tennessee), March 28, 1973; the Arkansas Gazette (Little Rock, Arkansas), June 16, 1974; The Courier Journal (Louisville, Kentucky), July 15, 1974; the Flint Journal (Flint, Michigan), July 17, 1974; the West Side Times (Chicago, Illinois), July 18, 1974; and the Rough Rock News (Chinle, Arizona), September 16, 1974.

Newspaper articles provide subjective evaluation from an assortment of community members, as illustrated by the following statement:

"The attitude changes after the kids get a couple of books they can keep. RIF really helps, because the kids get to keep the books. In many cases, these are the first books they've ever owned." (a teacher)

In addition, local newspapers provide information on a wide variety of fund-raising activities that evidence high levels of commitment to and interest in RIF. The usual sources of support for community programs include federal monies as well as donations of funds, facilities, and supplies by

private organizations. These are supplemented by activities ranging from social-evening benefits, raffles and bingo games, and benefit fashion shows to an imaginative drive carried out by National Guardsmen who collected contributions from people on their way to a local football game. Publicity efforts have included a "Name the Giant Frog Contest" and mural, poster, and storytelling competitions.

Taken in totality, the direct reports from local RIF staffs and community members present a unified picture of enthusiasm and support. The spectacular spread of RIF in the short nine years since the pilot project of 1966 is another index of its success (see Table I).

Table I

Based on these observations, it appears that RIF is meeting the important expectations of making extensive book distributions and involving many types of service organizations and community members including the children themselves, teachers, parents, libraries, and volunteer workers.

In addition to these forms of documentation of participants' views of the programs, a formal evaluation of RIF has been funded by the Carnegie Corporation. This report is a summary of the results of that evaluation. The complete study, *A Multisite Evaluation of Reading Is Fundamental: Technical Report*, has been submitted to the National RIF office in Washington, D.C.

TABLE I

Growth of Nationwide RIF Programs Since 1969*

Year	Active	Developing	No. of States
1969-1970	10**	0	0
1970-1971	31	8	22
1971-1972	73	30	34
1972-1973***	128	89	40
1973-1974	203	119	46
1974-1975	282	85	46

*These figures reflect the calendar year totals which are slightly higher than those shown on past charts giving Fiscal Year figures (ending in June).

**Model Projects.

***The complete Handbook for Development and Operations of RIF Programs became available in October, 1973.

THE MULTISITE EVALUATION OF

THE READING IS FUNDAMENTAL PROGRAM

This evaluation was undertaken to assess the success of RIF in meeting its objectives and goals. Similar to many other social action programs, these objectives and goals are simultaneously elementary and sophisticated. They are basic in that they reflect common sense beliefs about the positive qualities of youngsters, parents, teachers, and communities. General program objectives related to these beliefs include: (1) that children have books which are of interest to them and which they can call their own; (2) that the efforts of parents, teachers, and other community members combine to provide children with programs which are integrated into their total life experiences; and (3) that programs such as RIF have impact not just upon the relationships between school, teachers, and children, but also encourage increased involvement between parents and children through shared experiences (e.g., books).

As stated earlier, specific objectives, as defined by the National RIF program, include the following:

- That each participating child select a minimum of five free paperbacks during the school year;
- That the children have total freedom of choice in book selection;
- That there be continuity of the program over a period of time (three years minimal);

- That there be involvement of parents in the program;
- That there be involvement of a cross section of the community in the program.

These objectives are sophisticated in that they reflect understanding of the complicated set of factors which affect the life expectations and opportunities of youngsters. Desire to read, ability to read, and the encouragement to read are linked to educational achievements, which are in turn linked to economic and employment accessibility. RIF does not formulate its aims in terms of such long-range outcomes. Nevertheless, these aims are recognized in the program's major goal: it is important to enhance children's interest in reading, and to encourage community and parental support for this purpose.

The multisite assessment of the RIF program has taken a two-pronged approach to its task, investigating not only the product but also the process of project operations. The product evaluation has focused specifically on the stated goals and objectives of the RIF program and hence has provided data on the impact of RIF upon children, parents, teachers, and delivery agents (that is, the setting or medium, such as a library, that hosts a local project).

The process evaluation is based on a data-management system created to generate a continuing internal assessment of the RIF program. Three of its instruments are identical to probes used in the product evaluation to discover how teachers and delivery agents judge the

effectiveness of their current RIF projects. In addition, three new monitoring tools have been developed, to channel feedback data systematically from local RIF projects to the national office. Two are profile instruments. The first is designed to collect demographic and budget information and covers such subjects as location and type of program, grade levels of children served, and number of books purchased during the year. The second concerns the basic operation of the project, problems encountered from book publishers, special project features, and so on. The third questionnaire relates to regional cluster meetings of local RIF project representatives. Data gathered periodically from these six instruments will provide continuously updated information and enable the RIF staff to make on-line adjustments in the program based on systematic field input.

Methodology of the Product Evaluation

Sample Selection

Five classifications of people in six study locations composed the subjects of the national evaluation of RIF: children, both RIF and non-RIF; smaller groups of their parents; RIF teachers; and two types of delivery agents (in two of the sites).

Child Sample. The sample of children consisted of 200 fifth graders and 240 second graders attending 19 schools in the following six sites: New York City; Firebaugh and Mendota, California; Phoenix; Oklahoma City; Pittsburgh; and Chicago. Although non-English-speaking youngsters were excluded from the study, the children had differing ethnic backgrounds -- black, white, Mexican-American, and Puerto Rican. Half were attending RIF programs and half were not. Each group consisted of 115 girls and 105 boys.

To qualify as a RIF participant for the purposes of the multisite study, a child had to belong to a RIF program for at least two years except in New York City, where the project selected had been operating only a year. (This two-year requirement was waived for the New York City sample due to the unavailability of any community center based program that had met the two-year requirement.) Both RIF and non-RIF youngsters were selected at random from class attendance lists and matched with one another as closely as possible by sex and ethnic background.

Two achievement measures helped insure that the two groups were indeed matched or highly comparable. The Wide Range Achievement Test (Reading Subsection) was administered to all the children. Analyses of their responses showed no substantial differences between the RIF and non-RIF students in either the second or the fifth grade. Information on the latest standardized reading test scores was also used; results were available for 160 of the second graders (84 RIF and 76 non-RIF children) and 179 of the fifth graders (91 RIF and 88 non-RIF). These indicated that there were no statistically important differences between the performance levels of the RIF and the non-RIF children.

Parent Sample. Fifty-two individuals constituted the parent sample. Of these, 25 had children enrolled in a RIF program and 27 did not. Most of the parents interviewed were English-speaking, but Spanish-English interpreters were present when needed during the interview.

Teacher Sample. Forty teachers, all of whom taught at RIF schools, comprised the teacher sample. Twenty-two of them were teaching second grade and 18 fifth grade.

Delivery Agent Sample. Oklahoma City was a library based RIF program and New York City was a community center based program. The remaining four programs were school based. The delivery agents in Oklahoma City and New York City were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning their respective programs. Both of these were completed.

Instrumentation

The evaluation project used three separate sets of instruments to collect data from three of the subject samples -- children, parents, and teachers. In addition, the RIF representatives at the library based and community center based programs completed questionnaires.

The Composite Child Instruments. The composite child instruments contained five different sections. Three measured attitudes toward reading and books (Affective Rating Instrument, Sentence Completion Instrument, and Reading Apperception Instrument). One assessed familiarity with classic children's literature (Huck Inventory). One gathered basic information on the children's reading habits at school and at home as well as some attitudinal information (Child Interview). This composite instrument was designed by the research staff of the evaluation project, with advice from the RIF Advisory Board and the National RIF staff. A more extensive discussion of each subsection may be found in the Results section of this Summary report.

The Composite Parent Instruments. The composite parent instruments employed in this study consisted of three subsections. The first and second of these, designed to measure each parent's perceptions of his or her child's attitudes toward reading, were the Affective Rating Instrument and Sentence Completion Instrument described above. Parents were asked to respond to the items as they thought their child would respond. The third section, the Parent Interview, like the Child Interview described

above, was designed to collect basic information from parents on their children's reading habits and attitudes. Additionally, several optional questions were included which addressed parents' reading interests and habits, such as "Do you like to read?" and "How often does your child see you reading?"

Teacher Instrument. Designed to collect information on the impact of the RIF program from the teacher's point of view, this instrument was administered only to teachers of the experimental subjects. It included a number of open-ended questions inviting teachers to comment on the value of the program and to suggest ways of improving it.

Library Interview and Community Center Interview. The Library Interview addressed the advantages and disadvantages of a library based RIF distribution system, and invited comments on the value of the RIF program as well as suggestions for its improvements. Similarly, the Community Center Interview was primarily concerned with obtaining information on the relative merits of a community center delivery system. In addition, comments were invited on the value of the RIF program as well as suggestions for its improvement.

Procedure

One female interviewer conducted all of the interviews with child and parent subjects. To control for experimenter bias, a research assistant recorded data along with the interviewer during each test session at one of the six sites used in the study. The index of reliability between the interviewer and the assistant ranged from .88 to 1.00, with a mean of .98.

The children were given their tests individually in a room apart from the classroom, a corner of the auditorium, or a quiet hallway; each composite took 20 to 25 minutes to administer. Parents' interviews, which took 15 to 20 minutes, were conducted at the school, in the home, or at their place of business. Teachers and library personnel completed their inventories independently of the interviewer at their convenience.

At the beginning of the session with each parent, the interviewer briefly described the nature of the study and emphasized the confidentiality of the responses to the questionnaires. During the interview, she read all questions and response choices to the subject directly or through the intermediary of a Spanish-English interpreter when necessary. In all cases, the interviewer recorded the parent's responses.

Results

The Composite Child Instruments

A wide variety of research instruments were included in this study of the impact of RIF upon children. The variety of the measures reduced the probability that differences (or similarities) in the responses of the 440 youngsters were linked to instrument biases. Extensive analyses conducted to gauge the reliability and validity of the composite have found that it displays high inter-tester, test-retest, and internal consistency reliability coefficients. It has been shown to have good content as well as construct validity. The power of the composite and the authenticity of its results are corroborated by the agreement among items from various tests designed to gain the same information. In addition, the large number of subjects rendered strength to the power of the instrument and its results.

Extensive analyses have been conducted on:(1) data from each of the evaluation instruments; and (2) data from combined scores (factors) constructed from items of these various instruments. The research measures are briefly described below.

The Reading Apperception Instrument. This questionnaire was the one projective measure among the varied instruments used in this evaluation. Like most projective tests, it provided the youngster with a picture designed to provoke a response. This sort of measure is grounded on the

supposition that the subject will project personal feelings and attitudes into his or her description of the picture and its meaning.

The children involved in this research were given the following instructions:

> *"I am going to show you a picture. I would like you to tell me a story about the picture -- what is happening in the picture and what the child is thinking and feeling about what she/he is doing."*

Subjects were then shown a picture of a child engaged in reading a book. Pictures of male and female and black and white children were used, matched to the sex and ethnic background of the subject.

The interviewer used probes (for example, "How does he [or she] feel about what he [or she] is doing?" "Does he [or she] like or not like reading the book?") to elicit as many responses from the child as possible during a one minute period. Responses to the Reading Apperception Instrument were then scored for: (1) the number of positive responses (such as, "She looks happy"); (2) the number of neutral responses (for example, "He's reading"); and (3) the number of negative responses (such as, "She doesn't like to read").

The Affective Rating Instrument. The Affective Rating Instrument was a four-item instrument used to assess attitudes toward reading, books, libraries, and school. Specific items on the instrument consisted of the

following:

"How [do you feel] about reading?"

"How about story books?"

"And the library?"

"And how about school?"

The interviewer recorded responses on a five-place scale ranging from very positive to very negative. The scale was represented graphically on a card showing five line drawings of smiling to frowning faces, and the children answered each item by pointing to the face that corresponded with their attitude. Almost all the subjects, both RIF and non-RIF, reacted very positively to the questions on this instrument.

The Sentence Completion Instrument. The Sentence Completion Instrument used in this evaluation was a nine-item instrument designed to measure positive, neutral, and negative attitudes toward books, reading, and school. Sample items and response categories from the instrument are as follows:

"Books are

Great. . .

All right. . .

Awful. . ."

"If someone asks me what do I learn from reading, I tell them I learn

A lot. . .

A little . . .

Nothing. . ."

"Going to reading class is something

I don't like to do . . .
I don't mind doing . . .
I like to do . . ."

As on the Affective Rating Instrument, most respondents, regardless of RIF or non-RIF status, indicated very positive feelings on the topics targeted by the Sentence Completion items.

The Huck Inventory. The Huck Inventory is an instrument designed to measure children's familiarity with storybook characters and events. Two versions of the measures were used.

The Huck Inventory (Grades 1-3) was administered to the second grade youngsters. Eight items comprised the instrument, such as:

"Little Miss Muffet was badly frightened by

A toad . . .
A spider . . .
A snake . . ."

The Huck Inventory (Grades 4-6) was given to all of the fifth graders. Items on this measure differed from those on the Huck Inventory (Grades 1-3) in that the story characters and events were taken from readings suited to the older ages of the youngsters being scored, for example:

"Charlotte's Web is a book about a spider who

Befriends Freddy Fox . . .
Befriends Wilbur, the Pig . . .
Befriends an elephant . . ."

The Child Interview. The principal goal of the RIF project is to motivate participating children to want to read. Underlying this aim is the assumption that children will develop a taste for written material naturally when they are provided with interesting books they can keep as their own. The Child Interview was constructed to explore some of the myriad elements that feed into a youngster's impetus toward reading and to assess RIF's part in seeding and nurturing that impetus.

The Interview was an extensive as well as comprehensive instrument containing 49 items. Some addressed the subject's feelings about reading and books:

"How much do you enjoy reading?

A lot . . .
A little bit . . .
Not at all . . ."

"Do you like going to the library? (Any library)

A lot . . .
A little bit . . .
Not at all . . ."

Some questions probed the child's reading habits:

"Where do you read besides in school? . . .

At home . . .
In library . . .
At community center . . .
Other . . ."

"Does anyone at home read out loud to you?

Yes . . .
No . . ."

"Who is it? . . .

Mother . . .
Father . . .
Sister/brother . . .
Other . . ."

Various items concerned the availability of books:

"About how many [books] do you have that belong to you? A couple of books . . . a lot of books? How many, do you think?

"

"Is there anyplace near where you live to buy books?

Yes . . .
No . . .
Don't know . . ."

"[Did you go to] the book fair at school . . . ?

Yes . . .
No . . ."

As these examples illustrate, the Child Interview examined not only the child's attitudes, but also his/her reading habits.

The Factor Scales from the Composite Child Instruments

Initial analyses were conducted on the individual items of the various instruments (described above) and on various item combinations

within each instrument. These preliminary analyses revealed only small differences between groups. The reasons for this are twofold. First, three of the direct-response measures -- the Affective Rating Instrument, the Sentence Completion Instrument, and the Child Interview -- were particularly prone to positive response set, that is, the tendency of a respondent to choose favorable answers even though he or she may not actually hold such feelings. The inclination arises from the subject's awareness that positive attitudes toward reading, books, school, and so forth are socially desirable. The second reason was the restricted format of the response choices for most items. Questions on the Child Interview, for example, typically allowed for only three possible answers: a positive one, a negative one, and a neutral one. Thus the children tested were not given the opportunity to indicate many degrees of feeling.

In an effort to overcome these problems, similar items from the three instruments were identified through computer-based factor analysis and combined into four new measures to obtain variances greater than those recorded for individual items. The following four factor scales emerged:

> The Reading Factor Scale, based on responses to ten instrument items, measured how much youngsters generally liked reading. The items of which it was composed included:

"How [do you feel] about story books?

"When I read I feel

Great . . .
Good . . .
Bad . . ."

"Reading is

Boring . . .
All right . . .
Fun . . ."

The School Factor Scale was composed of three items that indicated to what degree the children generally liked school. One of these was:

"I think school is

Great . . .
All right . . .
Awful . . ."

The Book Environment Factor Scale assessed how much the child enjoyed being around books. Two of its

four items focused on the subject's attitude toward the library; the other two, one of them following, concerned books themselves:

"Would you like to have more books?

Yes . . .
No . . .
Don't care . . ."

The Book Wealth Factor Scale consisted of two items related to the child's ownership of books (both answers were recorded in terms of the number of books the child mentioned):

"About how many books do you have that belong to you? . . ."

"What books did you buy [this month]? . . ."

These four factor scales facilitated more accurate, complex understanding ing of the data. As stated previously, a primary function of this multivariate approach was that it increased the variance of the responses so that differences between groups were more readily observable. Analyses were conducted by RIF/non-RIF status, sex of respondent, city, grade in school, and combinations of these variables.

Substantial differences emerged between the responses of the RIF and the non-RIF children on the Book Environment Factor Scale. The scores of the RIF youngsters were higher, indicating a greater interest in being around

books, whether in their own possession or in libraries. This finding substantiates the RIF aims of encouraging children to like books and enjoy being in the presence of books. The differences between the scores of the RIF and the non-RIF subjects on the other three factor scales were only slight.

Other types of differences were those associated with grade level, sex, and site. These findings, and brief discussions, are presented below:

• Grade in School. Second grade youngsters were much more positive on the School Factor Scale than were fifth graders. This finding is consistent with much education research on attitudes toward school. Particularly for children in low-income settings, the educational environment is regarded less and less positively as the child grows older. Conversely, the fifth grade children scored higher on the Book Wealth and the Book Environment Factor Scales. These differences are explainable by the fact that the fifth graders are simply older than the second graders and hence have had more time to accumulate books. Fifth graders might have been more positive on the Book Environment Factor Scale because their greater physical mobility permitted easier access to libraries.

• Sex of Youngster. All four factor scales reflected statistically significant differences between the responses of boys and girls. On three scales (Reading Factor, School Factor, and Book Environment Factor), the girls were more positive than were boys. A great deal of research in the areas of education and sex differences lend support to these findings.

Generally, girls display earlier and greater verbal fluency than do boys; such abilities contribute to earlier interest and skill in the reading activities which comprise a major component of school-related activities. Additionally, the school environment itself usually rewards those behaviors for which female children are traditionally more socialized, e.g., passivity, obedience, quietness, etc. Taking these issues into consideration, there is little surprise that girls scored more positively than did boys on these Factor Scales.

Less readily understandable is why boys indicated higher scores on the Book Wealth Factor Scale. Either the boys tended to exaggerate (or exaggerated more) the numbers of books which they owned, or they did in fact have more books.

- Site. There were some differences in the responses obtained from children at various sites to items on the School and Book Wealth Factor Scales, but no consistent positive or negative patterns were discernable.

The Composite Parent Instruments

The composite parent instruments consisted of three sections, two of which were identical with those on the composite child instruments (the Affective Rating Instrument and Sentence Completion Instrument); the third section of the parent composite was designed to gather additional information from parents on their children. Some data on the parents' own behaviors and attitudes regarding books and reading were also collected.

There were 52 parents included in the parent sample; 27 had a non-RIF child. Like the Child Interview subsection, the Parent Interview was a comprehensive instrument with varying response formats to accomodate the different types of items; it comprised 35 questions in its core and six optional questions.

One of the analyses involving the composite parent instruments focused on how well each subject predicted his or her child's responses to questions on the Affective Rating Instrument and the Sentence Completion Instrument, as well as to some questions on the Child Interview. On six of the 13 Affective Rating and Sentence Completion items matched for this purpose, RIF and non-RIF parents differed substantially (10% or more) in the accuracy of their predictions, with the RIF subjects more accurate on two items and the non-RIF more accurate on four. The general pattern in both groups was to underestimate the positiveness the children's responses.

Another analysis compared parents' responses with their children's on five pairs of questions drawn from the Parent and the Child Interviews:

Parent item	Child item
"Does your child ever read to you or to someone else in the family?"	"Do you read out loud to anyone at home?"
"Does your child talk about what he/she has read?"	"Do you talk to anyone about the books you read?"

Parent item	Child item
"What is your child's reaction when he/she gets a book as a gift?"	"Do you like people to give you books?
"Does your child own any books?"	"Do you have any books that belong to you?"
"How often does your child go to the library?"	"Have you been to the library this month?. . ."

Except on the first item, to which both RIF and non-RIF parents were much more likely to answer "Yes" than were their children, the parents' answers corresponded with those of the youngsters. One more pair of questions, taken from the Parent Interview and the child's Affective Rating Instrument, was submitted to the comparison analysis:

Parent item	Child item
"Do you like to read?"	"How [do you feel] about reading?"
Yes, a lot . . .	
Yes, a little . . .	
No . . ."	

The responses of the RIF and non-RIF adults were not substantially different from one another, but the RIF parents who answered that they liked to read a lot were slightly more likely to have had children who chose the most smiling face as the answer to their matched item (48 percent of the first group of parents and 40 percent of the second).

Other interview items collected further information from parents on their children's behaviors and attitudes regarding printed material. The attitude questions included:

"Does your child like to read?"

"Does your child enjoy it when someone reads to him/her?"

"Does your child like books?"

"Does your child like comic books or magazines?"

Some of the questions concentrating on the children's behavior were:

"Does your child read at home, including homework?"

"About how many hours a week does he/she read at home, aside from homework?"

"About how many books has your child read in the past month?"

On these items, as on virtually all others in the composite parent instruments, there were only small differences between the responses of the RIF and the non-RIF parents. The one exception was "About how often does he/she buy comic books or magazines?", to which RIF parents were much more likely than non-RIF parents to respond "Never".

Another type of information gathered by the composite parent instruments highlighted the adults' own attitudes and behaviors, as distinct

from their children's. One question posed for this purpose was also used in the comparison analysis discussed previously: "Do you like to read?" Other such parent-directed items were: "Would you like to see your child spend more time reading?" "Do you ever read your child's books?", and "Do you buy books for your child?" Once again, differences between the responses of RIF and non-RIF parents were small.

As in the case of the composite child instruments, the restricted range of the response choices on individual items as well as the possible tendency to choose favorable answers may have resulted in the small differences discussed above. Therefore, several factor scales were formed from the items of the composite parent instruments using a technique similar to that for the child instruments. Three strong factor scales emerged from this analysis. The Reading Enjoyment Factor Scale dealt with questions about whether the parent's child liked to read. The Parental Influence Factor Scale involved the desire of the parent to see the child read more and parents' efforts to promote reading. Finally, the Book Ownership Factor Scale concerned how frequently the parent bought books for the child and whether the child read to the parents. On this last scale there were statistically significant differences between RIF and non-RIF parents. That is, RIF parents rated themselves higher than non-RIF parents on buying books for their children.

The Teacher Instrument

The Teacher Instrument was designed to measure the subjects' observations on: (1) the effect of RIF on their students' reading attitudes and habits; (2) parents' reactions to RIF activities;

and (3) the RIF program itself. Since the teacher sample was drawn exclusively from the RIF population, no analyses could be computed on RIF/non-RIF differences.

Generally, teachers responded very positively to the questionnaire items, particularly those that addressed students' interest in reading and motivation to read. The following are selected items, annotated with the percentages of subjects who chose each possible response, and some relevant excerpts taken from teachers' own comments:

"Do your students enjoy RIF books?"

not at all . . .

. . .

. . .

. . . [5%]

very much . . . [95%]

"The children love the RIF books. I personally feel that the students have a great deal of pride in owning books. The books stimulate a great deal of interest in reading among students."

"I am personally proud of the program."

"Do you feel that the RIF program has helped motivate your students to read?"

not at all . . .

. . .

. . . [13%]

. . . [40%]

very much . . . [47%]

"Many of my students would never have a book of their own if it was not for RIF. This also helps motivate them to learn to read, so that they can read their own books."

"The majority of the children who enjoy reading really appreciate and gain from this program. However, some fifth graders who are below grade level in reading just don't seem to be motivated or have much interest in the program."

"Do you feel that the RIF program has helped your students to enjoy reading?"

not at all . . .

. . .

. . . [11%]

. . . [24%]

very much . . . [66%]

"I think its main value is helping to improve attitudes about reading. Children seem to come to realize that reading can be a real pleasure and they can gain a lot from recreational reading."

"Do your students show pleasure or pride in owning their own books?"

not at all . . .

. . . [3%]

. . . [8%]

. . . [16%]

very much . . . [73%]

"Because the children get to keep the books to read and reread at their leisure, they don't have to worry about returning them to a library -- writing in them, etc. The book becomes one of their prized possessions as many of our children don't have too much to call their own."

"How would you rate the general parental reaction?"

unfavorable . . . [3%]

. . . [3%]

. . . [21%]

. . . [18%]

favorable . . . [55%]

"Do you feel that the RIF program is worthwhile?"

not at all . . .

. . .

. . . [3%]

. . . [8%]

very much . . . [90%]

"Yes -- the children are <u>extremely</u> anxious about RIF Day. They enjoy selecting their own books. The program creates an enthusiasm about books and reading. I know of no other way in which many of my students could ever own his own personal book. They take great pride in their books -- RIF Day is an <u>exciting</u> day for all students."

The teachers' pattern of positive responses to the interview items were generally in accord with both the abundance of subjective statements they made, and the results of other RIF evaluations. On two of the items ("Do your students enjoy RIF books?" and "Do you feel that the RIF program is worthwhile?") 90 percent or more of the teachers responded "Very much."

Items on which the teachers were less positive about the impact of RIF upon student attitudes and behaviors included "Do you think that the RIF program has stimulated independent reading in class?" (only 24% responded "Very much") and "Do you feel that the RIF program has stimulated

your students to read outside of school?" (only 30% responded "Very much").

From these findings, the teachers appeared to believe strongly that students' attitudes are affected by their involvement with the RIF program, but they reported a lower degree of RIF influence on students' behaviors.

The Library and Community Center Interviews

Oklahoma City was a library based RIF program and New York City was a community center based RIF program. The other four sites had school based programs. Delivery agents in Oklahoma City and New York each completed questionnaires concerning their evaluations of the delivery system involved, their impressions of RIF, and their assessments of its impact on the children, parents, and schools.

Both respondents saw advantages in the respective types of programs they administered. The community center representative felt that this delivery system expedited the book fair distributions. The library respondent commented that the library delivery system provided the children with an opportunity to learn more about the library and to see the library and librarians in a positive context.

Both the community center and library respondents reported working very closely with the schools and stated that the schools were supportive of their efforts. They also rated parents' and students' reactions to RIF as very positive and viewed the entire program as very worthwhile.

Discussion

The Multisite Evaluation of Reading Is Fundamental has utilized a wide range of measurement instruments and sophisticated statistical analyses to explore RIF's impact on participating children. As the assessment of the raw data progressed, it came to focus primarily on three sets of attitudes expressed by the youngsters in the RIF programs: (1) attitudes toward being in the presence of books -- the Book Environment Factor Scale; (2) attitudes toward reading (all juvenile printed matter, comics and magazines as well as textbooks and pleasure books) -- the Reading Factor Scale; and (3) attitudes toward school -- the School Factor Scale.

Each of these attitude areas can be considered as points on a continuum of abstractness and complexity with regard to the potential impact of RIF. Book environment factors cluster at one end of the continuum, representing the most fundamental set of attitudes: the reading factors are in the middle; and the school factors lie at the other end of the continuum. That is, the Book Environment Factor Scale measured the area open to the most direct and fundamental area of possible influence. Encouraging children to be happy around books is a first step toward developing their skills and enjoyment in reading. Changing their general feeling about reading would appear to be more difficult and complex, and affecting their attitude toward school seems most difficult.

The significant difference between RIF and non-RIF students on the Book Environment Factor Scale was a salient research finding. RIF youngsters did exhibit more positive feelings toward being in the presence of books, which demonstrates that RIF is having a beneficial impact on children in this most elementary area. These feelings are, in essence, building blocks to underpin increasingly receptive attitudes toward reading and school. While RIF did not appear to be directly affecting the children's views on school and reading at the time of this study, such influences may be either too subtle for measurement or germinal (see the next section of this Summary).

The Book, Reading, and School Factors may also be regarded as representing segments of a continuum of autonomy in attitudes and behaviors over which the child has varying degrees of control. In the realm where the child has most control over his views and actions -- enjoyment of being around books -- the RIF program can and does have an impact. In the other two factor areas, reading and school, greater external pressure is placed on the child to conform to the expectations of others. It may be that children's resistance to academic pressures neutralizes or masks the influence of RIF participation.

There are other interesting and plausible explanations for the general lack of substantial differences between the scores of RIF and non-RIF youngsters on the Reading, School, and Book Wealth Factor Scales. One is that important differences may in fact exist but this research project has not effectively identified or measured them. This possibility too

will be explored in the next section; briefly, however, it seems unlikely because of the variety of instruments used to gather data and the sophistication of the methods of analysis.

An alternate possibility is that the differences do not exist or that they are too greatly masked by social patterns to be uncovered by traditional instruments for measuring attitudes and behaviors. The perspective of the total environment of many RIF children lends credence to this hypothesis. The causes of economic deprivation are complex, as are its effects on children, their parents, and their communities. In the past 10 years, the United States has experienced a period of intensive attention to the needs of the poor. Early efforts to remedy poverty conditions often ended in bitter feelings of futility over the lack of apparent success of "miracle" programs such as Head Start. Faced with the realization that major social problems require major social responses, some advocates of reform then abandoned their efforts in despair; those who have remained have had to grapple with the still ill-understood interplay of individual, family, and community variables that facilitate or restrict change.

The changes that RIF aims to implement must be viewed against the economic, social, educational, motivational, and personal realities of the lives of children whose families live in poverty. The needs of these children are extensive and urgent; thus, the absence of significant differences between RIF and non-RIF youngsters on two attitude dimensions may merely reflect the magnitude of their needs. An analogy may be found

in nutrition. Consider, for example, a child who is slowly starving. Recognizing that the child is in danger, concerned people provide remedial doses of vitamin C since, as we all know, vitamin C is essential to healthy development. Later, when the child is reexamined, he is still found to be starving to death.

By the same token, given the multiplicity of deprivations in poor children's lives, any one remedial endeavor faces overwhelming odds against creating a difference that can be recognized or measured. This is particularly true of programs such as RIF, whose effectiveness in reorienting children's attitudes and behaviors may not emerge for years to come. The capacity of books and reading to provide personal joy is for many program participants an unfamiliar concept that needs to be encouraged and developed throughout their childhood and adolescence.

Limitations of the Multisite Evaluation of the Reading Is Fundamental Program

The purpose of this section is to call direct attention to problems and limitations that qualify the findings of the nationwide assessment of RIF. Some of these impediments beset many evaluation studies of social action programs; others relate more specifically to this research project.

General Limitations of Social Action Evaluative Research

The last two decades have witnessed the emergence of a variety of compensatory programs. These have arisen out of a recognition that certain people -- the intended program recipients -- have been in some way excluded from processes available to others ("others" usually meaning the more affluent). These programs have been directed toward balancing out some types of deficiencies in the lives of such individuals by providing special remedial services and resources.

Evaluation studies of the effectiveness of these compensatory endeavors have been seriously and consistently frustrated by a lack of measurable change following the introduction of the remedial efforts. Answers to the question "Why hasn't the program had more impact?" typically fall into one or more of three categories:

- The program is working; the problem is that its impact has not been measured accurately by the

research. This is usually explained as resulting from inappropriate questions and/or the general insensitivity of current measurement techniques.

- The program is working; however, the effects are in essence germinal, that is, the intended changes in behaviors or attitudes are not yet marked enough to show up in measurements. However, these effects will be sufficiently strong to be measurable at some later time in the subject's development.

- The program doesn't work, and given the extensiveness and complexity of negative factors in the lives of the poor, it is little wonder that such programs (even those that involve a span of family members and community groups) cannot reverse behaviors, attitudes, and events in people's lives.

A common element of these conclusions is the difficulty of measuring either existing causative elements or elements of change in the lives of participants. In many cases, the subjective evaluations of the recipients and affiliates (for example, children and their parents and teachers) have strongly approved programs that are at best only mediocre when submitted to more objective tests. Thus, a primary question facing evaluators is whether subjective assessments represent a more holistic view of the influence of reform efforts than do formal measurements.

These factors combine to produce an uneasiness with the findings of evaluative research on social action projects. Assessments have often been equally accepted or rejected, depending on the weight that readers of the reports give the various evaluation components. The importance of some basic evaluation guidelines has thus been underscored by these research experiences. Central among them is that a program's objectives must be defined very specifically and precisely so that its achievements can be measured against them. This requisite forces both program developers and program evaluators to deal with all three of the assessment problems described above.

Specific Limitations of the Reading Is Fundamental Evaluation Project

The specific problems in the multisite study of RIF cluster into four basic classifications: sampling factors, child-program interaction factors, general evaluation factors, and the ceiling factor.

Sampling Factors include:

- The relatively small numbers of children who participated in a program for two years or more;
- Change over time in the quantity and quality of the RIF programs;
- The representativeness of the selected RIF sites;
- The accuracy of the match between the RIF and non-RIF samples.

The first three factors are closely related to one another. While there are currently 282 active RIF programs throughout the United States,

relatively few of them have been functioning long enough for their children to have participated for the two continuous years (required of all but the New York City subjects) by the winter of 1974.

The programs that did meet this participation criterion were in fact older ones whose operations have provided the National RIF staff with a great deal of trial-and-error information. RIF has made enormous strides in developing a body of technical advice and materials to guide local projects.* Much has been learned about how to gain the attention and interest of communities, parents, and children, how to seek out personnel and funding support, how to set up and run the book distributions, and how to encourage and reinforce the adult activities that determine whether or not a project is successful. This knowledge has been systematically incorporated into RIF literature and community efforts.

As a consequence, some of the more recent programs are the beneficiaries of lessons learned in the older ones. The decision to concentrate on older programs in the national evaluation was based on the importance of continuity over time: the experience of RIF workers indicates that children begin to discriminate in their choices after the first or second book distribution. However, the selection of these

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* See the *Handbook for Development and Operation of RIF Programs*, *RIF Guide to Book Selection and 1975 Supplement*, *RIF Project Plan Form*, *Parent Flyer Sample*, and the RIF film, *Bequest of Wings*.

older programs may have resulted in a less than representative picture of the current state of most RIF programs in the country.

The fourth problem, the accuracy of the match between the RIF and the non-RIF respondents, arises fairly commonly in comparative research. In the study of RIF, the children (and hence their parents) in the two samples were matched for similarity of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and were selected most often from schools in immediate geographic proximity to one another. Still, of course, no two individuals are exactly alike; nor are any two classrooms, schools, or groups of children. Hence, the findings of comparative studies must always be tempered by the realization that matched groups cannot be perfectly identical.

Child-Program Interaction Factors. RIF seeks to reach large numbers of children, and it carries out this aim through projects that are by nature each unique to the individual community. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the local efforts vary in the support given to them and/or in the effectiveness with which they encourage children (and parents) to enjoy reading.

There are quite probably specific combinations of characteristics and children that interact more effectively than other combinations. The objectives of this evaluation did not really lend themselves to winnowing out such relationships, precisely because RIF prefers to dispense books to large numbers of children rather than to a well-defined, highly particularized few. Hence, data analyses apply to all the children and

programs studied rather than to special, smaller groupings of children and program components.

The General Evaluation Factors. As discussed in the previous subsection, certain problems typically arise in social action evaluations. A number of these were encountered in the evaluation conducted on the National RIF program. These were:

- The appropriateness of the definitions of the measured objectives;
- The lack of longitudinal data on whether the RIF and the non-RIF children were in fact originally comparable before the participating group entered the RIF program;
- The inability of the instruments to measure whatever long range impacts may occur;
- The concentration of the evaluation instruments on the children (and to a lesser extent on the teachers, parents, and delivery agents) which precluded a more inclusive survey of community impact.

It is indeed unfortunate that the data necessary to answer the longitudinal questions are simply not available. The clock could not be turned back to determine the initial comparability of the samples, but subsequent RIF evaluation projects might well consider developing a

longitudinal design that will track RIF children in order to measure the eventual effects of the program. The restriction of this study to the children and the program affiliates can also be overcome in subsequent national evaluations. The Recommendations section of this Summary Report includes several suggestions for enlarging both the longitudinal and the latitudinal reach of later evaluations.

The ceiling factor. A surprising finding in the multisite study was the consistently positive attitudes expressed by both the RIF and the non-RIF children toward books, reading, school, and the library. This pattern, while encouraging to those who seek educational advances for children from underprivileged backgrounds, in some cases produced a ceiling effect, which significantly reduced the possibility of unearthing whatever substantial differences in viewpoints might exist. For example, in answer to the question "Have you read any books or stories lately?", 98 percent of the RIF children and 99 percent of the non-RIF said "Yes." There is no room for qualifications in a yes-no response format, which means that if the overwhelming majority of subjects tend even slightly toward one of the two responses, there will be no substantial difference between groups. This was a major reason that the factor scales were generated, since they reflected more variance. These calculated scores have been used in the assessment of the impact of the RIF program as described earlier. They are sophisticated mechanisms for dealing with the ceiling effect that emerged from the instruments used in this study. Nevertheless, the clustering of the

children's responses at the extremely positive pole strongly suggests that future evaluations develop and use instruments that tap into shadings of answers more effectively. The next section of the Summary describes some instrument changes that will make more sensitive analyses possible.

The presentation of the limitations on the national assessment is not meant to negate the reported findings but is intended to place them in a proper context. This study is expected to be just the first of numerous further nationwide evaluations of RIF over the next few years. RIF is constantly evolving, and the findings of evaluation reports such as this will be incorporated into the decision-making processes that affect its future objectives and impact. It is important for subsequent research projects to incorporate what has been learned from the conduct of this evaluation into their efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The broad-scale investigation of six Reading Is Fundamental programs has harvested a number of recommendations from the analyses conducted. These fall under two main headings: suggestions and modifications of the design and instruments of subsequent evaluation research, and proposals for new developments and orientations in the National RIF program.

Research Design and Instruments

Several of the limitations of the multisite evaluation can be remedied in future assessments by changes in research design. To begin with, the problem of sample restriction due to the two-year rule will virtually cure itself with time. Later studies will be able to draw their samples from a larger population of long-term participants, and the expansion of the candidate pool will in turn make it possible to select sites and subjects that constitute a more representative coverage of the RIF program nationwide.

This first multisite evaluation, as noted earlier, had no way to collect either pretest or posttest longitudinal data. Future assessment efforts might include provision for more long-term monitoring of the subjects. Such data will not only insure the original comparability of the sample groups but will provide a means of extending the comparisons well beyond the germinal stage of the program's effect.

The basis for enlarging the latitude of subsequent evaluations already exists: an abundance of informal data testifying to community support is currently available in the form of letters, newspaper articles, reports on fund-raising activities, and so forth. Future research can be designed so that these data are measured objectively and included in extensive analyses of RIF's impact. The three monitoring instruments created as part of this research project, the two profiles and the cluster-meeting questionnaires described in the discussion of process evaluation, provide the framework for such community wide assessments.

The ceiling effect generated by the tendency to give socially desirable responses can be circumvented by modifications of the answer formats. Two changes seem particularly needed. The direct-response alternatives should be increased from the usual two or three -- negative, neutral, and positive -- to at least five, so that subjects can register gradations of reactions to all items. Some instrument items should be rank-ordered, to provide information on the relative importance of question topics (for example, books and reading) in the child's hierarchy of life interests.

Future evaluations can further correct the imbalance due to positive response set by focusing more on behavioral changes. The multisite study not only emphasized the dimension of attitude more than behavior but relied wholly on the children's self-reports and the reports of those close to them. Research techniques can be devised to put together a more objective picture of a child's habits than the report method allows. For

instance, the evaluation project might arrange with the subjects' teachers to incorporate a free-time period into specified class days so that a researcher can record how frequently the children choose reading as their unplanned activity. It should be noted, however, that observation techniques such as this are expensive. Another approach, less obtrusive as well as less costly, would be to analyze the children's behaviors from readily available information, for instance, the entries on their personal library cards.

RIF Developments and Orientations

The findings of the multisite evaluation show that while the projects have opened the minds and feelings of participants and their families to books, they have not as yet demonstrated a definitive impact on reading attitudes and practices. If RIF is to extend its influence, it must contemplate developing other strategies that will focus on reading per se.

The Handbook indicates that National RIF is already aware of this need. It suggests workshops for team leaders and for parents in which they can discuss their favorite books. Some programs have encouraged children to create their own Reading Is Fun Day, using stories they have written themselves.

New activities should be developed along these and other lines. RIF might train team leaders to hold workshops with children that focus on the functions reading serves in our culture. Members of various professions -- policemen, architects, carpenters -- could visit the classroom to explain

how they use written language in their jobs. This kind of experience would educate children to the need for reading in daily life.

Other activities should focus on the pleasure of reading. These might include programs where children dramatize a popular RIF book or their own creative writing. RIF could also sponsor community poets, fiction writers, and journalists to give readings of their work.

Whatever the activity, it will have the greatest effect if children participate in planning it and if it involves them directly in the use of books in activities that are pleasurable to them. Participation itself may be another variable that arouses a child's interest in reading, as the Handbook again recognizes by encouraging local organizers to ask for the children's active help in all stages of the RIF operation.

This insight brings up the final and most comprehensive of the suggestions regarding RIF's present parameters: that the national staff periodically reconsider the program's goals and objectives in order to define them more explicitly.

The RIF program serves functions other than its stated first-order priority of motivating children to read. When it organizes an area for book distributions, it sets into motion a network of social dynamics. Teachers and librarians, parents, other volunteers, and children come into new relationships with one another, and for a time, they focus on selected aspects of the world of books and reading. RIF programs in their various formats have received an overwhelming welcome from people

across the nation. In addition, the rapidly expanding number of local RIF projects indicates that communities are happy about working on RIF undertakings.

When so many people from so many backgrounds express excitement over a program, it seems safe to assume that it is meeting some important social needs. Clearly, for example, RIF furnishes a focus for community spirit and a matrix for various segments of a locality to utilize in working toward common purposes.

Serving these kinds of social needs may be as important as providing an impetus to reading motivation. RIF, like other social action programs, needs to begin to look at the implicit functions that it provides for the communities and the individual volunteers who support it. Future evaluation studies might investigate who is attracted to do volunteer work, what sorts of changes the work makes in the volunteer's life, what impact the program has on establishing rapport among groups in the community and what the effect is of the size of the community on the volunteer effort.

These are enormously extensive questions that go to the heart of the issue as yet only broached by social science and education research. Yet they bear on the articulation of RIF's specific purposes and thus on assessments of the progress of its program. There is no doubt that RIF's growing awareness of the need to embrace the child's total environment in its projects reflects American social realities as well as its own

experiences with communities. The continued sharpening of program objectives and the refinement of evaluation study designs and instruments will help expand RIF's influence throughout the fabric of the populations it serves.